



Harbinger

SPRINGFIELD CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER VOL. 18 NO. 1

He awakes from his sleep only to find the morning cold and brisk. The cool air fills his lungs as he stretches and realizes that it must still be very cold outside. He crawls to the edge of his home only to find himself squinting to protect his eyes from the bright glare off the snow-covered ground. He steps out only to feel the cold snow melt under his feet. The rumble in his stomach tells him it's time for a snack but it's awfully cold to be out in search of food. Just a few months ago, the forest floor was soft and covered with newly fallen leaves and food sources were plentiful. Now the soil is frozen and food sources are depleted or hidden under the snow. His metabolism slowed tremendously to ensure his fat reserves will sustain him throughout his deep winter sleep. Nearly three months have gone by since he's had a succulent green blade of grass. Why search for food now on this cold wintry day when he can crawl back into his den and sleep in? The story goes that if a groundhog sees his shadow then spring weather is here. No shadow means another six weeks of winter, and on this gloomy overcast day the weather confirms his decision to sleep until winter is over.

Once the holiday break is over, many of us relax and take a deep breath after all the holiday shopping

and running around we've done and burrow in for the winter. If you've made a New Year's resolution to be more active, this is the time to start. Many people restrain themselves to

temperatures. During the winter, you may find the outdoors among the most pleasant and quietest times of the year. Don't retreat into your den this winter. Bundle up and

enjoy a calm, serene stroll around your neighborhood or on our trails. Join us for an evening stroll during

Rise and Shine

indoor activities because of the cold weather and taking on those same "hibernating" habits of the groundhog. His metabolism slows down to ensure his survival, but ours need not. If you're working on raising your metabolism, then join us for a winter hike with the Hiking Club. In January, Volunteer Specialist Don Brink is leading the group on a winter survival hike at Noblett Lake.

The nature center trails remain open all winter until 6pm; however, this time of year you'll find little activity from trail walkers. If you're looking for a tranquil walk, take advantage of the season when trail hikers are scarce. Dress for the weather and take advantage of a fresh snowfall. This is a perfect opportunity to get a new perspective of our trails that few individuals experience. The wildlife activity has slowed, singing insects are hidden or gone, many song birds have migrated, and human activity is less visible. Even traffic noise appears to dissipate each evening as dusk settles in with dropping

one of our Owl Prowls and see live owls at the indoor program provided by Dickerson Park Zoo in January and February.

And if you're a fan of the majestic bald eagle, join us for Eagle Days at the lake's edge to view wild eagles around Springfield Lake and a close-up view of Phoenix, Dickerson Park Zoo's live eagle, shown during indoor programs on January 17 and 18.

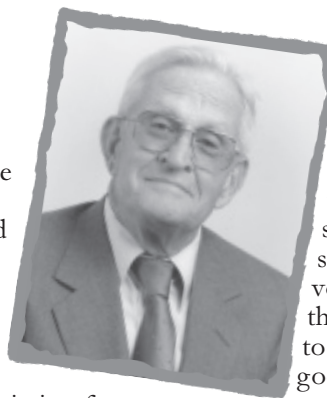
If you're like me, the best time to go fishing is when you can, so don't let the cold temperatures hold you back. In fact, trout fishing is at its best in winter. In January, the Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association is helping the For Adults Only group and Conservation TEEN Club fish for trout at Bennett Spring.

Just because we have six more weeks of winter, don't let the cold keep you away. Leave the comfort of your den and enjoy the outdoors by visiting the nature center for Family Month in February because there are plenty of programs to enjoy both indoors and outdoors.

~~Rudy Martinez

Chipping In . . .

Bob Dyer



He might not do backflips like the San Diego Chicken, but if the nature center had a mascot it would probably be Volunteer Naturalist Bob Dyer. His enthusiasm for helping us meet our goal of educating citizens about our natural resources may never be eclipsed.

Like any good mascot, Bob has been around for a while. He began volunteering at the nature center in 1990 and has since become a central figure in our volunteer corps.

In the past 13 years, Bob has been involved in too many projects to name all of them. From preschool

programs to working the front desk to maintaining the bluebird trail, he's done most of the jobs there are to do around here. In 2001, Bob was presented with an award from the Conservation Commission for volunteering 6,000 hours of service. That's equivalent to almost 3 years of working a full-time job! His total volunteer hours now stands at 6,227.

A prerequisite for being a successful mascot is having a good sense of humor, something Bob definitely

possesses. It's a trait that comes in handy when you're standing on a lakeshore for hours in sub-freezing weather with a telescope helping kids try to spot bald eagles that won't sit still (something Bob has volunteered to do on more than one occasion). His ability to take a ribbing and to "give as good as he gets" has enlivened many a day at the nature center.

A trait of all good mascots is a love for their job. Bob's enthusiasm for volunteering will probably always remain unsurpassed. During his tenure as a Volunteer Naturalist, Bob has under-gone two hip replacement surgeries. After each surgery Bob took a brief hiatus only to be back on the nature center trails within months. Let's see the San Diego Chicken do that!

There's an adage that reads "All good things must come to an end." Unfortunately for us, we're finding out that's true. This year Bob has decided to retire from the ranks of the Volunteer Naturalists. We're certainly sorry to see him go and will miss his presence on the "field" doing his part and encouraging the rest of the team to do the same. Although he's turned in his uniform, like any retired mascot we know he's still rooting for us.

Please join us in thanking Bob Dyer for all his years of chipping in.

Thank you . . .

The nature center would like to thank Paul R. Turner for his donation. We would also like to thank Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World for loaning animal mounts for our 15th Anniversary celebration and Caveman for donating comic books for our Halloween program. Thanks to all!

Volunteer Milestones

Betty Johnson	1500 Hours
Michele Skalicky	1000 Hours
Doug Gilliam	300 Hours
Dan Liles	300 Hours
Mary Mangler	300 Hours
Tom Mortimer	200 Hours
Joyce Tolliver	200 Hours
Sandy Vaughn	200 Hours
Drew Albert	100 Hours

The View From The Bridge

The tenth season of Nature And The Arts is already underway. In November, world-renowned wildlife artist Al Agnew made an appearance to show slides of his extraordinary wildlife paintings as he presented **Through The Eyes Of An Artist**. Visitors were also treated to an up-close viewing four of his original paintings up close. If you missed this program (which was scheduled *after* the newsletter was completed and during the time he was in town visiting Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World for a one man gallery show and signing), you still have four more opportunities to participate in this season's offerings.

With the emphasis on the 200th anniversary of Lewis & Clark's famed Corps of Discovery, three of our speakers will share their perspective on this journey. On January 23, Folklorist and Naturalist Dianne Moran will share the natural history discoveries of the expedition in her **Nature's Plethora** presentation. Learn about some of the plant and animal species Lewis & Clark found along the way that were unknown to the "civilized" world back east.

On February 6, the Lewis and Clark theme continues with the return of Historic Interpreter Grady Manus as he portrays a crew member in **A Visit With George Drouillard**. As a hunter and an interpreter for the Corps of Discovery, Drouillard's journals provide a different perspective of the journey to the Pacific and back. Author Ann Rogers completes the Lewis & Clark story with her presentation on Friday, March 12, **Lewis And Clark In Missouri** (which is also the title of her book). Whether you're just becoming interested in or are well-versed on Lewis & Clark's historic journey, there's more to learn about their time in Missouri. From the two hundred miles they traveled up the Mississippi River to St. Louis in the fall of 1803 and the five months they spent in St. Louis preparing for the journey to their crossing of the state on the Missouri River, Missouri played a big role in this great American story.

Finally, the season concludes with a solo piano concert during **An Evening With John Nilsen** on Saturday, May 8. MagicWing Recording Artist John Nilsen returns to perform original, nature-inspired music from his ten CDs. Nilsen's current CD is #8 on the New Age Reporter national radio chart.

All of these programs begin at 7pm, are designed for ages 12 to adult, and require advance registration. Make plans to enjoy another great season of Nature And The Arts. You're sure to be inspired.

Linda Linda F. Chorice
Nature Center Manager



January

Events at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center

For programs requiring registration, call 888-4237.

Registration for all programs begins **January 2.**

9 Nature Investigators Temperature Control Friday, 4-5pm

Volunteer Naturalist Larry Stuart returns for another in-depth look at reptiles and how they deal with temperature control. How do reptiles warm up and when do they cool down? Learn all the tricks lizards and snakes use to control their body temperature. Ages 7-12. Registration required.

10 Hiking Club Saturday, 8am-5pm

Learn winter survival skills while on this hike with Volunteer Specialist Don Brink. Meet at the nature center and then carpool to Noblett Lake. Hike is five miles and of moderate difficulty. Pack a sack lunch, bring water, and wear sturdy, comfortable hiking shoes. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

Owl Prowl Saturday, 7-8:30pm

Nesting season comes early for owls, and they're already hooting in anticipation. Join us and the folks from Dickerson Park Zoo for a close-up look at live owls. After the indoor program, we'll head outside and try to call wild owls. Families. Registration required.

14 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug Wednesday, 11-11:30am

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story. Ages 2-6.

Nature Center Reflections

Photos on display during January and February



17 Eagle Days Saturday, 9am-4pm

We're celebrating the annual return of bald eagles to Lake Springfield. This special event combines the indoor presence of Phoenix, a live eagle from Dickerson Park Zoo, with outdoor viewing opportunities. An indoor program will be held every hour on the hour from 9am to 3pm. Stop by anytime and plan to spend about two hours. Families.

18 Eagle Days Sunday, 11am-4pm

[Same as January 17. An indoor program will be held every hour on the hour from 11am to 3pm.]

23 Nature And The Arts Nature's Plethora Friday, 7-8pm

Folklorist Dianne Moran shares many of the natural history aspects of Lewis & Clark's famed expedition during this Nature And The Arts program. Their journey of exploration included the discovery of 122 animal species and 178 plant species unknown to the "civilized" world back east. Their discoveries live on in the meticulous journals they kept and in the hearts of naturalists and adventurers who share their excitement of the natural world. Ages 12 and above. Registration required.

24 For Adults Only Bennett Spring Fly-Fishing Trip Saturday, 9am-Noon

Members of the Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will be present at Bennett Spring State Park for some first-hand fly-fishing instruction. It's catch-and-release season at the park—participants must have a fishing license and a \$7 trout permit. (Both are available at the park.) Bring your own equipment if you have it. A limited number of rods will be available for use. Participants need to meet at the hatchery building at 9:30am (directions will be provided). Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

24 Conservation TEEN Club Fly-Fishing Saturday, Noon-5pm

Spend a fun afternoon catch-and-release fly-fishing at Bennett Spring State Park. The Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will be on hand to teach us the basics before we try to land a big one. Participants must purchase a fishing permit (if 16 or older) and \$7 trout permit (regardless of age). Equipment, lunch, and transportation will be provided. Ages 12-17. Registration required.

Beginning Photography Saturday, 1-2:30pm

Join photographer and Volunteer Naturalist Bob Ball for a nature photography seminar. Emphasis will be on selection of film and digital cameras, wide angle and telephoto lenses, composition, and close-up techniques. Ages 12-adult. Registration required.

27 Conservation Kids' Club In Search Of Animal Clues Tuesday, 6:30-7:45pm

While wild animals are secretive and often hard to find, they leave behind signs that let us know they're around. Learn how to be a true nature detective as we teach you how to search for and read animal clues during this indoor program. Ages 7-12 only. Please no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids. Registration required.

30 Owl Prowl Friday, 7-8:30pm

[Same as January 10]

January 3 & February 7

HIKED IT ... LIKED IT!

Enjoy a naturalist-guided hike for families on the first Saturday of each month from 9 to 11am.

Movies are shown each Sunday from 2 to 3pm.





February

Events at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center
For programs requiring registration, call 888-4237.

Registration for all programs begins the first day of the month.

5 Purple Martin Primer Thursday, 7-8pm

Become a purple martin enthusiast and learn about their transient lifestyle. Join Volunteer Naturalist Debbie Good as she addresses some of the problems encountered by martin "landlords." Ages 10-adult. Registration required.

6 Nature And The Arts A Visit With George Drouillard Friday, 7-8pm

Discover what it was like being part of Lewis & Clark's expedition firsthand as George Drouillard, portrayed by Historic Interpreter Grady Manus, makes a visit for the third program in this season's Nature And The Arts series. As hunter and interpreter for the Corps of Discovery, Drouillard had a very significant role in this great American journey. Ages 12-adult. Registration begins January 2.

7 Conservation TEEN Club Finley Valley Serpentarium Saturday, 1-3pm

From crocodiles to copperheads, reptiles are a fascinating but often under-appreciated group of animals. We'll spend the morning with local reptile breeders Dennis and Mary Ann Harter and get a close, but safe, viewing of venomous species such as rattlesnakes, gila monsters, and cottonmouths. Meet at the nature center and then carpool to the serpentarium in Ozark. Ages 12-17. Registration required.

11 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug Wednesday, 11-11:30am

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story. Ages 2-6.

13 Nature Investigators Finding Food Friday, 4-5pm

Reptiles are hibernating now, but when they emerge in the spring they'll be looking for food. What will they eat and how will they catch it? Learn all about the eating habits of reptiles from Volunteer Naturalist Larry Stuart during this in-depth program. Ages 7-12. Registration required.

13 Otter-Mania Friday, 7-8pm

Special guests Glenn Chambers and his otters return! See hand-raised otters up close, learn about their habits, and hear about the Conservation Department's successful reintroduction of otters to the wild. It's guaranteed to be otter-ly fantastic! Families. Registration required.

14 Hiking Club Saturday, 8am-4pm

Join Volunteer Naturalist Doug Gilliam for a day of exploring. Meet at the nature center and then carpool to the Swan Creek Territory. Pack a sack lunch, bring water, and wear sturdy, comfortable hiking shoes. The hike is approximately 5 miles and of moderate difficulty. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

The Big-Mouthed Frog Puppet Show

Saturday, 1-1:45pm or 3-3:45pm
Hop-A-Long, the big-mouthed frog, returns with all his friends to teach you about the kinds of food wild animals eat. Enjoy the show and make some special puppets to take home with you. Families. Registration required.

15 Bluebird Basics Sunday, 3-4pm

Learn what you need to know to have bluebirds nesting on your property. This program is intended for rural and suburban residents only. (Sorry, bluebirds don't like to live "in town.") Ages 12-adult. Registration required.

20 Evening Stroll & Calling All Owls Friday, 6-9pm

Nesting season comes early for owls and they're already hooting in anticipation. The trails will be open and patrolled tonight (bring a flashlight and buddy). Indoors and out, we'll learn about how these incredible predators have mastered darkness. At 7pm, the folks from Dickerson Park Zoo will be in the auditorium to give you a close-up look at Missouri's owls. Families.

21 Critter Rock Display Saturday, 11am-3pm

Drop by anytime to view Artist Lin Wellford's painted rock display and to purchase her books.

Critter Rock: Part I 1-1:30pm

Lin Wellford, artist and author of *The Art of Painting Animals on Rocks* and five other books, returns to demonstrate her craft. Through slides, learn how she transforms simple rocks into works of art. Families.

Critter Rock: Part II 1:30-3pm

Join Lin Wellford for a hands-on workshop to try your hand at painting rocks. (You must attend the Critter Rock: Part I program before this workshop to learn basic instruction.) Ages 7-adult. Registration required.

24 Conservation Kids' Club Vulture Venture Tuesday, 6:30-7:45pm

Join us for an evening devoted to nature's cleanup crew—vultures. Have fun and learn the disgusting truth about these underrated birds of prey. Ages 7-12 only. Please no younger siblings. Registration required.

28 Intermediate Photography Saturday, 10am-2pm

This course will cover 35mm photography using nature as the primary subject. The workshop will include a morning lecture by Volunteer Naturalist Art Daniels, lunch (bring your own), and an afternoon photography session in the field. Bring a 35mm camera, film, lenses, and a tripod. Ages 15-adult. Registration required.

29 For Adults Only Beginners Bird Walk Sunday, 1-6pm

On this field trip you'll have an opportunity to view winter birds, waterfowl, and other migratory birds found along Lake Taneycomo. Meet at the nature center and carpool to Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery. Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Walk is two miles. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.



Survivor Family Fun Night
Friday, February 27 (see Page 5 for details)

Little Acorns . . .

Little Acorns programs are for children 3-6 years and are 45-minutes in length. Please limit **Little Acorns** programs to one per month. Registration begins the first day of the month.

January

Calling All Owls

What makes owls such great nocturnal hunters? Bring the tots to learn all about the mysterious lives of owls.

Wednesday, January 21

10am or 1pm

Foxes In The Fields And Forests

What kinds of foxes live in the fields and forests? Pounce on this program to find out facts about fox families. Fold a fox and make a fox face to take home.

Saturday, January 10

11am or 1pm or 3pm

Wily Coyote

How like a coyote and hear some coyote folklore. Learn why the cunning nature of this animal has earned it the nickname "trickster."

Tuesday, January 20

10am or 1pm or 3pm

February

Greet The Groundhog

It's February and time to celebrate groundhogs. Will spring be early or late? Only the shadow knows. Come out to learn about groundhogs and their shadows.

Saturday, February 7

11am or 1pm or 3pm

'Possum Trot

Where do opossums live? Do they swing by their tails? What do they have in common with dinosaurs? "Trot" on over to find out the answers to these questions as well as many others!

Thursday, February 12, 11am

Thursday, February 19, 10am or 1pm

Regal Eagles

Bald eagles are the kings of the sky. They are big, beautiful, and brawny. Come learn what other things make these special birds like royalty.

Friday, February 13

10am or 1pm or 3pm

Bring the family . . .

Whether you enjoy watching the "Survivor" series on television or you'd never waste your time watching reality shows, we have an evening planned for you. Bring your family and learn about true survivors—Lewis & Clark and other members of the Corps of Discovery. They managed to trek to the Pacific and



Friday
February 27
7-9pm

back successfully while facing many trials and dangers along the way. See what you need to know to be a member of our Corps of Discovery as you try your hand at games and activities designed to test your skills. Regardless of your success, everyone will be granted immunity! Families.



The Nature Nook Gift Shop . . .

The gift shop's featured special will be *Native Landscaping for Wildlife and People*. This book retails for \$18 but will be 20% off in January and February (no other discounts apply).

Great Backyard Bird Count, February 13-16

This is a joint project of Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology to create a map of winter bird distribution across North America. Help by counting birds in your backyard, local park, or other natural area on one or all four count days. Stop by the nature center and pick up a packet with data sheets and further information.



Harbinger Highlights . . .

Defined, harbinger (pronounced här'bīn-jər) is anything that fore-shadows a future event; omen; sign. Though the mercury has ebbed and frosty winds have whistled for the past several weeks, winter has in fact only recently begun. December 22 ushered in the winter season on the calendar and the natural world offers many harbingers of the cold season which lies before us.



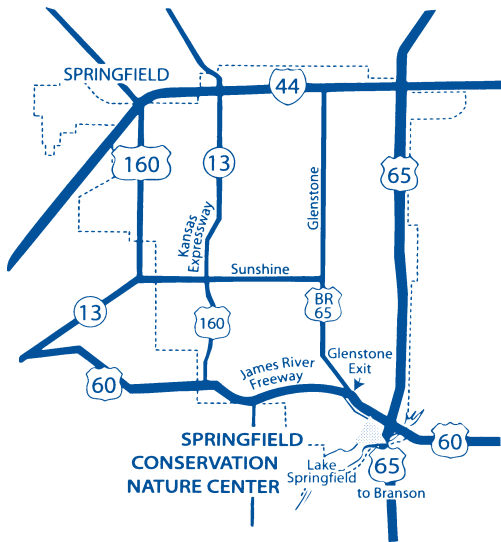
February 2 is Groundhog Day. Legend has it that if the groundhog emerges from its burrow, sees its shadow then retreats back inside, we'll have six more weeks of winter. The fact is groundhogs normally begin to come out of hibernation the first week of February, but due to a lack of food they only come out for short periods. If they came out for good in early February they'd probably starve.

Bald eagles began migrating to Missouri weeks ago. As winter weather becomes more frigid, their numbers increase as they seek to escape the even more severe temperatures to our north.

While many animals are born in the relative comfort of spring, the opossum chooses the dead of winter to bear her young. The mother will raise five to thirteen babies which are born toward the end of February.

Many of our native owls begin their breeding season during these short, cold days. The barred owl, a common year-round resident, usually begins courtship and breeding in February. During this time, they are especially vocal in their search for mates.





HOURS—The area is open daily 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. from March 1 to October 31, and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the remainder of the year. The building is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. year 'round. The building and area are closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The area is closed to pets, bicycles, roller blades, hunting, fishing, collecting, and alcoholic beverages. No fees are charged.

STAFF

SPRINGFIELD CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER

Linda Chorce	Manager
April Dozier	Interpretive Programs Supervisor
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James Dixon	Naturalist
Donna Legg	Naturalist
Rudy Martinez	Naturalist
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Nelda Hendrix	Administrative Staff Assistant
Cole Chatman	General Clerk
John Hinkle	Maintenance
Paula Mangan	Maintenance
Eric McMillan	Maintenance
Dave Rutledge	Maintenance
Mike Tillman	Maintenance
Mike Wilson	Maintenance



**Eagle Days
are here . . .
January
17 & 18**

**Friday
February 27
7-9pm**



Make plans to attend . . .

The nature center building and area will be closed on Christmas and New Year's Day.

<<http://www.missouriconservation.com>>

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